**Writing Prompt:**

The self-confessed television addict often feels he “ought” to do other things—but the fact that he doesn’t read and doesn’t plant his garden or sew or crochet or play games or have conversations means that those activities are no longer as desirable as television viewing.  In a way, a heavy viewer’s life is as imbalanced by his television “habit” as a drug addict’s or an alcoholic’s.  He is living in a holding pattern, as it were, passing up the activities that lead to growth or development or a sense of accomplishment.  This is one reason people talk about their television viewing so ruefully, so apologetically.  They are aware that it is an unproductive experience, that almost any other endeavor is more worthwhile by any human measure.

-Marie Winn

**Explain Winn’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

***Recapitulation:*** *What am I being asked to summarize or explain in my own words?*

What sentence from the excerpt do I think is most important?

In 15 words or less, what does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ want me to believe?

What might some people find to be controversial about what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ says?

***Invitation:*** *What am I being asked to give my opinion about?*

In what ways do I agree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

In what ways do I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

Where do I fall on this continuum?

Agree w/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ In between Disagree w/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Stipulation:*** *Where can I get my ideas from?*

For writing an essay, what ideas/examples would I take …

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| From the excerpt by \_\_\_\_\_ | From other readings/resources | From my own experience/observation |

Which of these ideas/examples best supports *my feelings* on the issue?

**Writing Prompt:**

Recently, major tobacco companies agreed to pay a financial settlement to several states, including California, for health problems caused by cigarette smoking and other kinds of tobacco addiction. If this course of action is right for tobacco companies, then manufacturers of other legal but harmful products such as alcohol and guns should also have to pay financial settlements in return for the problems they cause.

-Irving Coffman

**Explain Coffman's argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

***Recapitulation:*** *What am I being asked to summarize or explain in my own words?*

What sentence from the excerpt do I think is most important?

In 15 words or less, what does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ want me to believe?

What might some people find to be controversial about what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ says?

**Scoring Criteria**

A **6** essay is superior writing, but may have minor flaws. A typical essay in this category:

1. addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task
2. demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the passage in developing an insightful response
3. explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth
4. is coherently organized and developed, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples
5. has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language
6. is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

**Read the Sample Essay in response to Coffman. In the margins, note down specific things that make the essay a strong example of analytic writing.**

To what extent are manufacturers of harmful products liable for the damage their products cause? Tobacco litigation, which pays out large sums from tobacco companies to victims of smoking-related illnesses, would give the precedent that producers are liable completely for said damage despite the fact that the consumer chose to use the product. Following this mindset, Irving Coffman and other opinionated speakers believe that manufacturers of other similarly hazardous products should incur the same judgments as tobacco companies. While Coffman's all-inclusive argument may be ethically sound at first glance and spurring a whole new wave of punitive litigation, it remains implausible and avoids the truth of the issue by instead aiming for the obvious target.

In John Grisham's The Runaway Jury, the worth of the fictional Pynex Corporation, a tobacco manufacturer being sued for a smoker's death, is given by the prosecuting attorney as eight hundred million dollars. Jury foreman Nicholas Easter correctly deduces that to make a real impact on Pynex, the jury must award a large settlement that will shake the company. Assuming that this holds true for manufacturers of guns and alcohol, if such settlements were made, it would be impossible for these companies to remain financially solvent. Before considering their collapse as a benefit, Coffman and his concurring parties must remember that these companies are also conglomerates with far-reaching effects. Anheuser-Busch, which is a leading alcohol producer, also owns a nationwide string of educational parks. We cannot bankrupt the evil of a company without capsizing the whole, and with that collapse goes employment, education, and more. Coffman does not consider how implausible it is to crush economic mainstays in the name of moral right and thus by extension harm the people he it is crusading for, making his plan detrimental at least.

Back in Grisham's jury room, the second flaw in Coffman's plan it is on display. Several members of the Wood v. Pynex jury are smokers; one even starts during the due process of the trial. ON the day where they witness what lung cancer caused by cigarettes did to Jacob Wood, all these people are disgusted but keep smoking. They cannot magically quit. Coffman's theory does not comprehend that smoking and alcoholism are addictions which money can't solve. The money will go to purchasing alcohol if given to the "harmed" alcoholic because that it is the nature of addiction. Coffman merely funds what he seeks to defeat.

Coffman also lacks a true grasp on the ideas of danger and choice. He forgets that everything is potentially dangerous and it is the person using it who makes it one way or the other. When Martin Blank kills a man with a pen in Grosse Pointe Blank, does Coffman want a payout from the pen company and/or the realtor who gave Martin the pen? His scope of liability it is undefined and unfocused, making it difficult to enforce. The largest void, however, lies again with Grisham's jurors, who have a hard time delivering a plaintiff's verdict because of freedom of choice. Jacob Wood heard all the warnings they heard about smoking and its hazards, and he chose to smoke. Companies do not hold responsibility for wrongful death if, against their warnings, the victim persists in the harmful activity. They control the product; the person controls himself or herself

Irving Coffman wants what seems to be a true good by holding companies accountable for the wrongs of their products. But if he damages the economy while funding these vices inadvertently, and can't quantify who to blame but won't hold those individual participants responsible for their own lives, it is his idea of hazardous product liability really a good or simply a narrow-minded extreme?

**Writing Prompt:**

For many Americans, the concept of success is a source of confusion. As a people, we Americans greatly prize success. We are taught to celebrate and admire the one who gets the highest grades, the one voted most attractive or most likely to succeed. But while we often rejoice in the success of people far removed from ourselves—people who work in another profession, live in another community, or are endowed with a talent that we do not especially want for ourselves—we tend to regard the success of people close at hand, within our own small group, as a threat.”

* Margaret Mead, from *The Egalitarian Error*

**Explain Mead’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

***Recapitulation:*** *What am I being asked to summarize or explain in my own words?*

What sentence from the excerpt do I think is most important?

In 15 words or less, what does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ want me to believe?

What might some people find to be controversial about what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ says?

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6. is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

**Read the sample essay in response to Mead. Answer the question below.**

“He Who Dies with the Most Toys Wins”

In her book *The Egalitarian Error,* Margaret Mead states, “We are taught to celebrate and admire the one who gets the highest grades, the one voted most attractive or most likely to succeed. But while we often rejoice in the success of people far removed from ourselves—we tend to regard the success of people close at hand, within our small group, as a threat.” It is this occurrence, she says, that makes the “concept of success” complicated, seemingly contradictory, and thus often “a source of confusion.”

But is this the case in society? Success is seen as a source of happiness and security, a source of pride. It is thought of as a good thing to be successful. But success can become threatening when your classmates, neighbors, or coworkers are more successful than you. Then your pride is hurt. Though success itself is a good and positive thing, it creates competition that can foster negative interactions. In this society, we are taught to look to those people who are far out of reach as role models. We should strive to achieve the degree of success that they have. We should strive for greatness displayed in public so that, in the future, young children will be striving in turn to be like us. We look to famous actors, computer moguls, and people famous for being rich as the distant but maybe attainable goal that we should always work toward. We celebrate them when they turn out another great movie or another great computer program. They illustrate Mead’s statement that we celebrate the success of those far away from us. But more locally, things could not be more different.

How many times have you been compared to your older brother or sister? Or, how many times have your younger siblings been compared to you? Instead of giving them a brotherly pat on the back for doing a good job in school, or getting a raise at work, this comparison created hostile feelings. Also, teachers that grade on the curve constantly put students in direct competition with each other. So instead of congratulating your successful classmates on a job well done, you feel threatened because you are being graded against them.

On the other hand, if some stranger in a different school gets an A, why should you care? Sports teams are also a prime example of how success of others nearby can become threatening. Schools have forgotten the meaning of good sportsmanship and have replaced it with a desire to win, fueled by the fear that an opponent’s success might mean that they are better than you. Even youngsters can’t play a friendly soccer game without such worries looming over them. But this time it is the parents who are threatened by the success of the other side. This idea of others’ success being threatening is still present when you leave the soccer field and go back to your neighborhood. Cars, yard appearance, and satellite dishes represent success and create posturing among neighbors, as I have seen in my very own neighborhood.

I believe that success of people nearby is seen as threatening because it directly affects us. It affects how we feel about ourselves and what others think of us. This is not so much true when the image of success is far removed. Becoming an actor is seen as an impossible achievement, so we look up to anyone that has accomplished it. But it is not quite so close to home, and so it is more personally meaningful to be beaten out by people that you know in some activity that you take pride in. This is where success creates competitiveness and envy.

**Why do you think this essay received a score of 6?Writing Task**

* Read through the following four prompts:
  + Lois Quaide
  + Phyllis Stein
  + Earl Rochester
  + Perry Patetic

1. After each prompt, write a brief recap of what the author wants you to believe.
2. Choose one of the above prompts to write about.
3. Complete the Recapitulation/Invitation/Stipulation questions (on the next page of the packet)
4. Write a draft of the essay

**Make sure your draft:**

* Looks neat and professional. A person should be able to see the paragraphs from six feet away.
* Has an obvious thesis statement that clearly expresses your opinion on the given topic, and states the reason(s) for this opinion.
* Uses the full name of the author of the provided excerpt somewhere in the recap.
* Stays focused and presents ideas in a logical order to support your thesis.
* Responds directly to all parts of the writing prompt.
* Includes at least two pieces of evidence to support your opinion.

***Recapitulation:*** *What am I being asked to summarize or explain in my own words?*

What sentence from the excerpt do I think is most important?

In 15 words or less, what does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ want me to believe?

What might some people find to be controversial about what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ says?

***Invitation:*** *What am I being asked to give my opinion about?*

In what ways do I agree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

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***Stipulation:*** *Where can I get my ideas from?*

For writing an essay, what ideas/examples would I take …

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| From the excerpt by \_\_\_\_\_ | From other readings/resources | From my own experience/observation |

Which of these ideas/examples best supports *my feelings* on the issue?

**Writing Prompt:**

Because of cell phones, hiking in wilderness areas may be safer than before, but it is also noisier than ever. Although people might bring cell phones with them to use in case of an emergency, emergencies are rare. More often, people receive incoming business and even social calls. Technology seems to be following us everywhere: into the wilderness, and then back into civilization. Anywhere at any time, everyone else present can be disturbed by one person’s call. Because more people in these circumstances are bothered by cell phones than are helped, these gadgets should not be permitted in certain public places or designated natural areas.”

—Lois Quaide

**Explain Quaide’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

|  |
| --- |
| Brief recap of what the author wants you to believe: |

**Writing Prompt:**

The purpose of public universities should be to train the appropriate number of people for the professions. In order to fulfill this purpose, the number of students admitted to each field of study should be pre-set, as in Sweden, so that no more people are trained than will be needed to fill the estimated number of openings in each profession.”

—Phyllis Stein

**Explain Stein’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

|  |
| --- |
| Brief recap of what the author wants you to believe: |

**Writing Prompt:**

Two-thirds of adolescent and adult Americans drink alcohol, and of those, 8 to 12 percent will become alcoholics or problem drinkers. To combat this huge public-health crisis, we should begin a national system of licensing, with appropriate penalties. Applicants for a drinking license would first be required to study a manual containing basic information about alcohol and the law, much like the driver’s manual we all memorized in high school.

Next they would have to pass a written test, after which they would receive a drinking license. License holders, and only license holders, would then be able to buy alcoholic beverages (including beer). Most of the problem drinkers would, at some point, probably face arrest on alcohol-related offenses. If convicted, they would lose their license. A liquor store or bar caught selling to an unlicensed drinker would lose its license as well.”

—Earl Rochester

**Explain Rochester’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

|  |
| --- |
| Brief recap of what the author wants you to believe: |

**Writing Prompt:**

Ours is an open, fast-moving society—equipped with cars, trains, planes—that makes it too easy for us to move away from the people and places of our past. Not too many families live together in the same neighborhood; generally, we travel long distances in order for grandchildren and grandparents to spend time together, and often we lose track of old friends we never see again. As a result, we tend to lack the close, supportive relationships that people in former generations enjoyed. The advantages to living in such a highly mobile society are thus outweighed by the disadvantages.

—Perry Patetic

**Explain Patetic’s argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.**

|  |
| --- |
| Brief recap of what the author wants you to believe: |